

**Remarks of Mayor Paul Frain
Jake Hardison Challenger Jamboree
1130 Pineridge Road
Saturday, May 11, 2013
9:15 AM**

Thank you and good morning.

It's good to be here for another great day at the Azalea Little League Fields! I don't think there's any better setting for enjoying America's pastime than here.

We're here today to recognize someone who's given a lifetime to baseball. He is, in fact, one of little league baseball's legends – and that is, of course, Jake Hardison.

Jake was a Little League volunteer for 50 years. He served as the District Administrator for Virginia District 8 from 1975 to 2010 and started this Challenger Jamboree that enables physically and mentally challenged children to play and enjoy the game of baseball.

This weekend-long event will feature an additional sense of pride and accomplishment, as it is re-named in honor of Jake.

Jake worked tirelessly over the years for little league baseball. In 1998, Little League International headquarters revised the Little League playing rules to allow special needs children to play the game of baseball. Under Jake's direction District 8 Little League decided to invite the teams throughout the state to play baseball and have a fun weekend.

The first year 16 teams participated. From there the Challenger fun weekend steadily grew each year and by 2006 had expanded to nine states with 100 teams. This year more than 1,000 children are expected to participate, a remarkable achievement.

There is no competition involved between the teams, no score is kept and everyone plays every inning. Jake affectionately said of the event, "They all come as winners and they all leave as winners."

He was a diligent advocate for the growth of youth baseball in the region. He's spoken before many groups on numerous occasions.

He was awarded the Pete McGovern Award, the highest award given by Little League International as the events top volunteer. He's helped raise almost \$90,000, which has helped fund various state operations. The Genetti Hotel in Williamsport, PA named a room after him, joining Bob Hope and President Gerald Ford who also have rooms in their names.

Jake was able to bring the same joy of baseball that we may sometimes take for granted to those that wouldn't ordinarily have had the chance to play this great game.

He's touched the lives of thousands of children and Little League volunteers around the world through his efforts. Jake is the ideal model of a Little League volunteer. To honor his legacy by naming this tournament after him is a well-deserved recognition of his numerous and important contributions.

Baseball is a great game. It's a great sport. And all the mothers and fathers from Azalea Little League have worked together to create a great tradition in the City of Norfolk, including providing this opportunity for ALL boys and girls to play ball.

We are here today to dedicate this wonderful event and name it in Jake's honor – The Jake Hardison Memorial Challenger Jamboree. So thank you, Jake, for all you have done - and to borrow a line from Yogi Berra, another baseball great: "Thanks for making this day necessary."

Thank you.